The Holy Cat

Once, there was a cat who lived in a town. The cat was very good at hunting mice. The mice in the town were slow, so the cat caught lots of them. The cat knew where all the mouse holes were, so he could sit outside the mouse holes and wait for the mice to come out. Soon, the cat had hunted all the mice in the town.

So the cat went into the fields to hunt mice. But the mice who lived in the fields were much quicker than the town mice. The cat tried to hunt them, but he didn't catch many mice.

The cat had an idea. He left the fields for a few weeks and waited. Then he put some prayer beads around his neck and sat outside a mouse hole. He closed his eyes and started purring. He purred so that it sounded like a prayer.

Soon, a mouse came out of the hole and saw the cat with his prayer beads. 'Oh no, a cat!' he said, and quickly went back into the hole.

'Why do you run away?' said the cat softly. 'I am an old neighbour who has come back from holy travels, but you do not say "hello". You run away when you see me. Do not be afraid. Come and talk, and pray with me.'

The mouse was very surprised. It stayed in the hole, but it spoke to the cat. 'Why should I come and talk with you? Do cats not hunt mice? If I come and pray with you, you will eat me just like you ate my brothers and sisters.'

'Ah!' said the cat sadly. 'What you say is true. I have sinned many times. I sinned every time I hunted a mouse. But I am truly sorry. Look at these prayer beads. I do not hunt now, but I spend my time praying and reading holy books. I have studied the Qur'an and learned the Qur'an by heart, and I have visited the Hajj in Mecca.'

The mouse was very surprised by this. It was a very holy thing to do to learn the Qur'an by heart. Those who learned the Qur'an by heart were called Hafiz. And it was also very holy to visit Hajj. Those who visited Hajj were called Hajji. So this cat was both a Hafiz and a Hajji, which made him very holy.

'Go and tell your people about this,' said the cat. 'Tell them that I am sorry for my sins, and that I am working to be a better cat. Tell them that I want to speak and pray with them.' And the cat started purring again, like he was praying.

The mouse went and told his family, who were also very surprised. Each of them went and looked out of the hole, and saw the cat with his prayer beads, purring in a holy way. The mice all talked and decided to test the cat's holiness. They sent one mouse out to test the cat.

The mouse came out of the hole but stayed far away from the cat.

'Hello, friend,' said the cat, and went back to his 'praying'.

The mouse stayed outside a long time to test the cat. The cat prayed for a long time. But really, the cat was waiting for other mice to come out. He wanted to eat lots of them. But he sat there purring all day, and still there was only one mouse there to test him. He got hungrier and hungrier. Finally, he could not wait.

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The cat moved to eat the mouse, but the mouse was ready. When the cat moved, the mouse quickly ran into the hole.

'Why are you running away?' said the cat. 'I wanted to give you a friendly hug! You have tested my holiness – did I not pray all day? Have I not learned the Qur'an by heart?'

'A sinner can pray all day, but if he sins afterwards, it does not matter,' said the mouse. 'And you may have learned the Qur'an by heart, but you have not unlearned hunting mice.'

The cat moved so quickly that his prayer beads fell off, but he did not catch the mouse.

'Damn you!' said the cat.

The cat returned to the town. But there were no more mice there. So every day the cat had to purr nicely and ask for food from people. Sometimes, he tried hunting in the fields, but he never caught another mouse.

THE END

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